(c) what other measures Government proppse to take to check desertification?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) No, Sir. An area of 362 lakh ha. accounting to about 11% of the total geographical area suffers from desertification.

(b) So far, an area of 446 lakh ha. which is 1.23% of the total affected area has been treated under various programmes. They include, the core activities, such as land resources development, water resources development, and afforestation and pasture development.

(c) In addition to above, integrated land use development, integrated development programmes, developing drought preparedness and developing comprehensive anti-desertification programmes are proposed to check desertification in the country.

Low Yield of Indian Sheep

481. SHRI RAJENDRA PRASAD MODY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that on an average an Australian sheep yields five kgs. of wool annually, while the corresponding figure for India is barely 700 grams; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government for increasing the production of wool and improving its quality particularly in Rajasthan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes Sir, but with the difference that the corresponding figure for India is about 900 grams.

(b) The Government has taken up several steps for sheep/wool development programmes in the country including the State of Rajasthan with the basic objective of increasing quality and quantity of wool as well as the body weight of the animals. The Government has taken up the following programmes:

1. Central Sheep Breeding Farm, Hissar for the production and supply of superior exotic Rams to the States.

2. The National Ram|Buck Prdouction Programme and programme for Rabbit Development. This is a Centrally Sponsored Programme under which State Departments of Animal Husbandry are provided funds.

3. The Agriculture Development Project (Including Sheep Development) with World Bank assistance is under implementation in Rajasthan State.

Agricultural Labourers in the Country

482. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Agricultural labourers in the country with State-wise details;

(b) the amount of wages they earn with details;

(c) the reasons for a large number of agricultural labourers in the State of Bihar;

(d) whether there is any scheme to provide better employment opportunities to the labourers in Bihar; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) and (b) A Statement showing the Agricultural Labourers and Daily Wage Rates of Unskilled Agricultural Labour is annexed. (See below).

(c) The prevalence of high poverty level coupled with lack of occupational